

**Testimony  
by  
Larry Olsen  
Olsen Brothers Farms  
of  
Prosser, Washington**

**before  
The Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**at  
Yakima, Washington  
June 10, 2006**

Thank you, Chairman Goodlatte for providing me this opportunity today to testify on federal Farm Bill policy. It is my pleasure to welcome you and your distinguished colleagues to the Yakima Valley.

My grandfather migrated from Norway in 1906 and planted some of the first apple trees in the valley in 1908. My brother Dick and I started our own farming operation in 1972 on 80 acres of apples and cherries. 35 years later, we grow 465 acres of apples, 150 acres of cherries, 270 acres of concord grapes, 800 acres and 18 varieties of wine grapes, 385 acres of hops, 35 acres of blueberries and 70 acres of wheat.

Apples in Washington State, representing about 183,000 acres of irrigated farmland, are grown on over 5,600 orchards. Washington apples are a billion dollar plus crop. About 60% of the nation's apple production comes from this state, which leads the nation. About 30% of our state's yearly crop is destined for overseas markets, contributing favorably to the balance of trade. Of all U.S. apples which are exported, over 70% originate from this area.

Sweet cherries are also a very important crop to this part of the country. In about one week, we will begin harvesting cherries at Olsen Brothers, at which time, my workforce will increase to 500 people. The Pacific Northwest has some 3,500 cherry producers and the market value of this crop is approximately \$430,000,000. The Pacific Coast dominates national sweet cherry production, with our state leading the way. About 30% of our annual cherry production also, is sold overseas each year.

I was invited to testify today on the 2002 Farm Bill and how current and future challenges might be addressed in the next Farm Bill.

While chairman of the Washington Apple Commission and later the United States Apple Association, I frequently requested support from Congressman Larsen and Congressman Hastings for a variety of programs needed by specialty crops producers and apples in particular. I must admit feeling that fruit and vegetable growers have been treated, in the Farm Bill, like stepchildren in favor of program crops. However, I am not here to advocate price supports for fruit growers. Instead, I ask that this Committee provide additional support for programs that enable growers like me to compete in free national and international markets.

Let me highlight a few of your programs most important to Olsen Brothers.

1. Thank you for increasing funding for the Market Access Program (MAP) to its current level. It is a fabulous foreign market development tool for Northwest Cherry Growers and the Washington Apple Commission in their programs coordinated through USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. The Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) has also been helpful in our fight to keep export markets open.

2. I hope you agree it is in the public interest to fight the current obesity epidemic and other nutritional challenges, by encouraging the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables in our schools and within federal feeding programs such as WIC. This will aid producers like me while improving the health of our nation's children and the general public. Significant funding needs to be committed to this overdue effort.

3. And finally, a pet peeve of mine which is research. It is frustrating to frequently fight rear guard actions against administration efforts, both Democrat and Republican, to cut research funding. Thank God for Congressman Doc Hastings for protecting research which enhances my ability to compete with foreign producers, often heavily subsidized by their own governments. All of us in labor-intensive agriculture are very concerned about the immigration issue. I implore you to fund research into labor saving alternatives such as are being promoted by our Washington State Tree Fruit Research Service. If you only remember two words of my testimony, I hope they are "Technology Roadmap". The most successful companies and countries are those that invest heavily in research and development.

In closing, I urge you to heed more detailed Farm Bill testimony that will certainly be offered in the coming month by groups such as USApple, The United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association, and the Northwest Horticultural Council. I hope your visit is enjoyable and that my testimony assists in your important deliberations.

**Larry Olsen**

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**B.A. Communications, University of Washington, 1968**

**Specialty Ag. Producer since 1972, currently growing 2,150 acres of apples, cherries, wine grapes, concord grapes, hops and blueberries.**

**Past board member, Treetop, largest apple processor in the world.**

**Past board member, Washington State Horticultural Assn.**

**Past board member, Washington Apple Commission, Chairman, 2000.**

**Past board member, USApple, Chairman, 2004.**

Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules\* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2004.

Name: Larry Olsen  
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Organization you represent (if any): Olsen Brothers Farms

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do **NOT** require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: (None) Amount: \_\_\_\_\_  
Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: (None) Amount: \_\_\_\_\_  
Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: 

\* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: *Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.